Reasons against Popery

IN A

LETTER

FROM

Mr. *WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH*,

To his Friend

Mr. *LEWGER*,

Perſwading him to Return to his Mother,

The CHURCH of *ENGLAND*.

From the Corrupt

CHURCH of *ROME*.

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Reaſons againſt Popery, in a Letter from Mr. William Chillingworth *to his friend Mr.* Lewger, *&c.*

Good Mr. Lewger,

THough I am reſolved not to be much afflicted at that which is not in my power to Help, yet I cannot deny but the *loſs of a Friend* goes very near to my heart, and by this name of a *Friend*, I did preſume, till of late, that I might have called you; becauſe though perhaps for want of power and oportunity I have done you no good office, yet I have always been willing and ready to do you the beſt Service I could, and therefore I cannot but admire at your affected ſtrangeneſs which in your *laſt Letter* to me you ſeem to take upon you; renouncing in a manner all Relation to me, and tacitly *Excommunicating* me from all Intereſt in you. The *Superſcription* of your Letter is to Mr. *William Chillingworth*, and the Subſcription *John Lewger*, as if you either diſdained, or made a Conſcience of ſtiling me your *Friend*, or your ſelf mine. If this proceed from *paſſion* and *weakneſs* pray mend it; if from *reaſon* pray ſhew it: If you think me one of thoſe to whom St. *John* forbids you to ſay (*God ſave you*) then you are to think and prove me one of thoſe Deceivers, which *deny Chriſt Jeſus to be come in the fleſh*: If you think me an *Heretick*, and therefore to be avoided, you muſt

prove me to be *damnandus reus*, *condemned* by mine *own Judgment*, which I know I am not, and therefore think you cannot. If you say I do not *hear the Church*, and therefore am to be esteemed an *Heathen* or *Publican*, you are to prove then that by the *Church* is meant the *Church of Rome*, and yet when you have done so, I hope *Christians* are not forbidden to shew *humanity* and *civility* even to *Pagans*?

For God's sake Mr. *Lewger* free your self from this *blind Zeal*, at least for a little space, and consider with reason and moderation, what strange Crime you can charge me with that should deserve this strange usage, especially from you: Is it a Crime with all my understanding to endeavour to find your *Religion* true, and to make my self a believer of it, and not to be able to do so? Is it a crim to imploy all my reason upon the Justification of the *Infallibility* of the *Roman-Church*; and to find it impossible eto bejustified? I will call God to witness, who knows my heart better than you do, that I have *evened the Scale of my Judgment*, as much as possibly I could, and have not willingly allowed one grain of worldly motives on either side, but have *weighed the reasons* for *your Religion*, and against it, with such *indifference*, as if there were nothing in the world but God and my self; and is it my fault that the *Scale* goes down which hath the most weight in it? that the Building falls that hath a false foundation? Have you such power over your understanding, that you can believe what you please, though you see no Reason? Or that you can suspend your belief, when you see Reason? If you have, I pray for old *Friendship*'s sake, teach me this trick, and until I have learned it, I pray blame me not for going

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the ordinary way, I mean for believing, or not believing as I see reason. If you can convince me of *wilful opposition* against the *known Truth*; of *negligence* in *seeking* it, of *unwillingness* to find it, of preferring temporal respects before it, or of any other fault which is in my power to amend, that is indeed a fault, if I mend it not; be as angry with me as you please; but to impute to me *involuntary Errors*, or that I do not see that which I would see, but cannot; or that I will not profess that which I do not believe; certainly this is a far more *unreasonable errour*, then any you can justly charge me with; for let me tell you, the imputing *Socinianisme* to me (whosoever was the Author of it) was a wicked and groundless Slander. Perhaps you will say (for this is the usual Song of that side) *Pride is a voluntary fault*, and with this I am justly chargeable, for forsaking the *Guide* that God hath appointed me to follow: but what if I forsook it, because I thought I had reason to fear it was one of those *blind Guides*, which whosoever blindly follows, is threatned by our Saviour, that both *he* and his *Guide* shall *fall into the Ditch*? then I hope you will grant it was *not Pride*, but *Conscience*, that moved me to do so; for as it is wise humility to obey those whom God hath set over me, so is it sinful credulity to follow every man, or every Church, that without warrant will take upon them to guide me: shew then some good and evident title which your *Church of Rome* hath to this Office; produce but one reason for it, which upon tryal will not finally be resolved and vanished into incertainty, and if I yield not unto it, say, if you please, I am as proud as *Lucifer*.

In the mean time give me leave to think it ſtrange, and not far from a Prodigy, that this Doctrine of the *Roman Churches* being the *Guide of Faith* (if it be true Doctrine) ſhould either not be known to the *Evangeliſts*, or if it were known to them, yet being Wiſe and Good Men, they ſhould either be ſo envious of the Churches Happineſs, or ſo forgetful of the Work they took in hand, which was to write the *Whole Goſpel of Chriſt*, as that not ſo much as one of them ſhould mention ſo much as once this ſo neceſſary part of the Goſpel, without the belief whereof there is no Salvation, and with the belief whereof, unleſs men be ſnatched away by ſudden death, there is hardly any damnation. It is evident they do all of them with one conſent ſpeak very plainly of many things of no importance in compariſon hereof, and is it credible or indeed poſſible that with one conſent or rather conſpiracy, they ſhould be ſo deeply ſilent concerning this *Unum Neceſſarium?* You may believe it if you can, for my part I cannot, unleſs I ſee demonſtration for it: And if you ſay they ſend us to the *Church*, and conſequently to the *Church of Rome*, this is to ſuppoſe that which can never be proved, that the *Church of Rome* is the *only Church*, and without this ſuppoſal upon the Diviſion of the Church, I am as far to ſeek for a Guide of my Faith as ever.

As for Example: In that *Great Diviſion of the Church* when the whole World wonder'd, ſaid St. *Jerom*, that it was become *Arrian*, when *Liberius* Pope of *Rome* (as St. *Athanaſius*, St. *Jerom*, and St. *Hilary* teſtifie, ſubſcribed their Hereſie, and joyned in communion with them: or in the Diviſion betwixt the *Greek* and *Roman Church*, about the *Proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt*, when either ſide was the Church to it ſelf, and each part *Schiſmatical* and *Here-*

Heretical to the other: what direction could I then, an ignorant man, have found from the Text of Scripture, *Unleſs he hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen or a Publican: Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.*

Again, Give me leave to wonder that neither S. *Paul* writing to the *Romans*, ſhould ſo much as intimate this their priviledge of *Infallibility*, but rather on the contrary put them in fear in the 11 Chapter, that they, as well as the Jews, were in danger of *falling away*!

That St. *Peter*, the pretended Biſhop of *Rome*, writing *two Catholick Epiſtles*, mentioning his departure, ſhould not once acquaint the *Chriſtians* whom he writes to, what Guide they were to follow after he was taken from them!

That the Writers of the *New Teſtament* ſhould ſo frequently warn men of *Hereticks*, *falſe Chriſts*, *falſe Prophets*, and not once arm them againſt them, with letting them know this onely ſure means of avoiding their danger!

That ſo great a part of the *New Teſtament* ſhould be imployed about *Antichriſt*, and ſo little, and indeed none at all, about the *Vicar of Chriſt*, and the Guide of the Faithful!

That our Saviour ſhould leave this only means for the *Ending of Controverſies*, and yet ſpeak ſo obſcurely and ambiguouſly of it, that now our *Judge* is the greateſt *Controverſie*, and the greateſt hindrance of ending of them!

That there ſhould be better evidence in the Scripture to juſtifie the *King* to this Office, who diſclaims it, than the *Pope*, who pretends to it!

That

That St. *Peter* ſhould never exerciſe over the *Apoſtles* any one *Act of Juriſdiction*, nor they ever give him any one Title of Authority over them!

That if the *Apoſtles* did know that St. *Peter* was made *Head* of them, when our Saviour ſaid, *Thou art Peter*, they ſhould ſtill contend who ſhould be the Firſt, and that our Saviour ſhould never tell them that St. *Peter* was the man!

That St. *Paul* ſhould ſay he was nothing inferiour to the very *chief Apoſtles*!

That the *Catechumeni* in the *Primitive Church* ſhould never be taught this Foundation of their Faith, that the *Church of Rome* was the *Guide* of their Faith!

That the Fathers, *Tertullian*, St. *Jerom* and *Optatus*, when they flew higheſt in recommendation of the *Roman* Church, ſhould attribute no more unto her than to all *Apoſtolical* Churches!

That in the Controverſie about *Eaſter*, the Biſhops and Churches of *Aſia* ſhould be ſo ill Catechiſed as not to know this Principle of Chriſtian Religion, The neceſſity of *Conformity* of Doctrine with the Church of *Rome*!

That they ſhould never be preſſed with any ſuch Conformity in all things, but only with the particular Tradition of the Weſtern Churches in that point!

That *Irenæus* and many other *Biſhops* notwithſtanding, *Ad hanc Eccleſiam neceſſe eſt omnem convenire Eccleſiam*, ſhould not yet think that a neceſſary Doctrine, nor a ſufficient ground of *Excommunication*, which the Church of *Rome* thought to be ſo!

That St. *Cyprian* and the Biſhops of *Affrick* ſhould be ſo ill-inſtructed in their Faith, as not to know this Foundation of it!

That

That they likewise were never urged with any such necessity of Conformity with the Church of *Rome*, nor ever charged with Heresie or Errour for denying of it!

That when *Liberius* joyned in Communion with the *Arrians*, and subscribed their *Heresie*, the *Arrians* then should not be the Church, and the Guide of the Faith.

That never any Hereticks for five Ages after Christ were pressed with this Argument of the *Infallibility* of the present Church of *Rome*, or charged with the denial of it as a distinct *Heresie*, so that *Æneas Sylvius* should have cause to say, *Ante tempora Concilii Nicæni quisque sive vivebat, & parvus respectus habebatur ad Ecclesiam Romanam*!

That the *Ecclesiastical Story* of these times, mentions no *Act of Authority* of the Church of *Rome* over other Churches; as if there should be a *Monarchy*, and the *King* for some Ages together should exercise no *Act of Jurisdiction* in it!

That to supply this defect, the *Decretal Epistles* should be so impudently forged, which in a manner speak nothing else but *Reges & Monarchas*, I mean the *Popes* making Laws to exercise Authority over all other Churches!

That the *Affrican* Churches in Saint *Austin's* time should be ignorant that the *Pope* was *Head* of the Church, and Judge of Appeals *Jure Divino*, and that there was a necessity of Conformity with the Church in this and all other points of Doctrine!

Nay that the *Popes* themselves should be so ignorant of the ground of this their Authority, as to pretend to it, not upon Scripture or Universal Tradition; but upon an imaginary pretended *Non-such-Canon* of the Council of *Nice*.

That *Vincentius Lirinensis* seeking for a Guide of his Faith and a Preservation from Heresie, should be igno-

rant of this so ready an one, the *Infallibility of the Church of Rome*!

All these things, and many more, are very strange to me, if the *Infallibility* of the *Roman* Church be indeed, and were always by Christians acknowledged the Foundation of our Faith: and therefore I beseech you pardon me, if I chose mine upon one that is much firmer and safer, and lies open to none of these Objections, which is *Scripture* and *Universal Tradition*.

And if one that is of *this Faith* may have leave so to do, I will subscribe with hand and heart,

Your very Loving and True Friend,

W. Chillingworth.

F I N I S.

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